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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001582

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY: TGS FEELING ERGENEKON SQUEEZE

REF: ANKARA 1083

Classified By: Ambassador James Jeffrey for reasons 1.4(b,d)

11. (C) Summary: Investigations into the Ergenekon case took a nasty turn with the revelation of what purports to be an original of the alleged military-penned anti-government "Action Plan," essentially a roadmap for bringing down the government and the Islamist Fethullah Gulen organization. The ensuing public outcry has put the military back on the defensive, prompting statements from the TGS trying to play down the issue and assure the public that it is investigating the new claims. Pressure on the TGS is mounting as actively serving members of the military are summoned for questioning.

Meanwhile, the timing of the document's leak has further raised questions about the independence of the Ergenekon prosecutors. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) The controversy surrounding an alleged military "Action Plan Against Fundamentalism" -- enumerating steps to undermine both the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the Fethullah Gulen religious order -- reemerged on October 23, with the publication in Taraf newspaper of a letter, allegedly from a military officer to the prosecutor's office, purporting to contain an original copy of the plan. The text of the letter claims that then-Deputy Chief of the TGS, Hasan Igsiz, had ordered the drafting of the plan, that TGS Chief Ilker Basbug was aware of the project, and that the TGS had covered up its involvement during its investigation into the alleged plan in June. Ergenekon prosecutor Zekeria Oz has reportedly summoned Colonel Dursun Cicek, the alleged author of the plan, and eight other active-duty soldiers who are accused of destroying evidence of military involvement in its drafting, for questioning.

¶3. (C) In the wake of the new document's release, the military is back on the defensive. Basbug met with Erdogan on October 29 in what was billed as a routine weekly meeting to discuss the case. The meeting was anything but routine: it was held on Republic Day -- Turkey's most important secular holiday -- and was uncharacteristically followed by a press statement which stressed that the letter is merely evidence in support of an allegation and should be treated as such while the case is ongoing. Before the meeting, the military had issued two statements to the press, one criticizing the leaks of court evidence to the press and the other announcing that military prosecutors had begun an investigation concerning the new evidence and reiterating the findings of military prosecutors in June to the effect that the then-available documents were of dubious quality.

¶4. (SBU) The government appears to be playing good cop/bad cop concerning the new developments in the case. Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Arinc has gone on the offensive, demanding the resignation from the army of all suspects tied to the plot who are still in active service. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Erdogan has taken a higher road, calling accusations against the military unacceptable and declaring that the accusers should also testify in court.

¶5. (C) Comment: The first point to note here is that we are talking about the original piece of paper with the action plan -- from which, presumably, the copy, which hit the street several months ago, was made. The fact that there is now an original in the hands of the authorities does not prove -- as yet -- that the document is authentic or a fake. The main significance of an original (aside from the fact that, if authentic, it indicates "moles" within the TGS trying to discredit their own organization) is that it will provide a forensics basis (watermarks, type of paper, specific printer attributes) to aid the investigation.

¶6. (C) Comment (cont.): Nonetheless, with the military having previously dismissed the first copy of the "Action Plan" documents as "mere bits of paper," the claim that the original document has been uncovered and sent to the prosecutor's office ratchets up the pressure. If the courts find the document to be admissible evidence (whether rightly

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or wrongly), we will likely see calls for the resignation of increasingly higher-ranking military officials suspected of approving the alleged cover-up. Calls for resignation of those involved -- not just from DPM Arinc but also among pundits, even respectable independent ones, such as Fikret Bila -- have already begun, and could quickly move up the chain of command as suspicion of a cover-up builds along with increasing doubt of military probity. This would confirm in the minds of Turkey's copious conspiracy theorists that Ergenekon is synonymous with Turkey's military-bureaucratic complex.

¶7. (C) Comment (cont.): The press is also rife with

speculation that the timing of the leaked evidence is too neat to be coincidental. Prime Minister Erdogan has too often taken aim at an easy target to deflect negative public opinion from a controversial policy. Israel has been the standard whipping-boy in this regard. Some journalists are speculating that the Ergenekon trial may be taking on the role of convenient bugbear when AKP falls afoul of public opinion. The "original document" leak came on the heels of a Kurdish nationalist upswell surrounding the return to Turkey from Iraq of PKK members under the guise of a "peace delegation, causing a collective drop of support for AKP among nationalists. The new developments related to the "Action Plan" have neatly supplanted the debate over the returnees in the news. The uncanny timing of the new evidence reinforces allegations -- including a comprehensive report on the case by British scholar Gareth Jenkins and speculation about an unseemly row in the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK) (REFTEL) -- that the Ergenekon case has been thoroughly politicized.

JEFFREY